REPORT ON JAZIRAH

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101 Geographically, Jazirah, i.e., "the Island", is that strip of territory lying between the rivers Dijla and Euphrates, but for the purpose of this report, the term Jazirah is understood in its administrative meaning as a Mohafaza of Syria, and will be studied as such.

AREA OF JAZIRAH AND ITS CULTIVABLE LANDS

The "Statistical Abstract of Syria" for 1950 gives the total area of Jazirah as 2,217,000 hectares divided between the Mohafaza center, i.e., Hassakeh, Qamishli, and Dijla, in the following proportion:

Mohafaza Center	1,525,000 hectares
Qada of Qamishli	392,000 hectares
Qada of Dijla	300,000 hectares

311 Of this total area, according to the same source, 444,266 hectares were cultivated in 1948-49, and 1,701,284 hectares were cultivable but uncultivated, while the uncultivable lands were only 71,450 hectares.

This terminology of cultivable and uncultivable is greatly misleading. If by cultivable is meant the lands which are not rocky or mountainous or forested, the terminology is right though it loses its economic meaning. But if by it is meant lands which can be planted and rendered productive to show some profit, then other factors have to be considered, and the productive "cultivable" area of Jazirah is greatly reduced.

122 The first of these factors is the amount of rainfall. It is really astonishing that the Syrian Government has not deemed it necessary to establish agricultural stations in different regions of Jazirah to record at least the amount of rainfall in the different localities. The only such station is at Hassakeh which is not primarily a wheat growing district and the mean annual rainfall over a period of nine years is less than 300 mm. This average is less than the minimum required for successful rain-fed cultivation.

I. The Mohafaza Center

311 Therefore about 80% of the 1,525,000 hectares mentioned as
312 cultivable in the Mohafaza Center are in fact uncultivable unless

irrigated, and the Jagjag and the Khabur could never irrigate such an area. Irrigation is the second factor involved in determining whether the land is cultivable or not.

II. Qada of Dijla

Turning to the Qada of Dijla, we find that the entire region has sufficient rainfall, two rivers and many springs in the villages. In fact, the abundance of rainfall in the northeastern part of the Qada known as Jazirat ibn Amr, makes the growing of summer crops hazardous because the hot, dry period is too short.

The lower part of the Qada, from Tal Koshak to Damir Kapu, is similar to the Qada of Qamishli. The land is flat and precipitation, though relatively abundant, does not compare with the more mountainous regions of Dijla.

III. Qada of Qamishli

The Qada of Qamishli with the lower part of Dijla, extends from Tal Koshak on the Iraki border, comprising the cities of Qamishli, Amuda, Derbassiya, to Ras el Ain on the Khabur which belongs administratively to Hassakeh. This region, some 200 kms. in length along the railway line and the Turkish border, is the best developed and most productive of the Jazirah.

In point of cultivability, it is divided into two parts:

1. A region bounded by the railway and a line running about forty kms. south and parallel to it, from the river Rad to Tal Brak to Tal Tamr on the Khabur.
2. The region south of this fictitious line.

This division is based on the amount of rainfall and the experience of farmers during the last twelve years. It is certain that the further one goes from the Turkish mountains, the less is the rainfall. That is why Tal Brak, about 40 kms. south of Qamishli, is considered the last profitable area for rain-fed farming. In the last few years when tractor cultivation expanded greatly and lands became scarce, new farmers cultivated the lands south of the parallel line down to Hassakeh and to a point about 40 kms. north of Rakka, and learned at their own expense that it does not pay unless the crop is barley and is carried on as a sideline to a principal enterprise in the northern regions.

A vast area lies south of the Rad to the Iraki border toward the Sinjar Mountains. Farmers have been prevented from cultivating

[179] it because of bloody disputes between the Shammar and Tay tribes. 311 The land is poorer than in the north and the rainfall is much scarcer. 244 Farmers who managed to plant barley on the fringes of the disputed 182 land in the bad year of 1951 lost heavily. It is improbable that an average year would give much hope of profit.

Ras el Ain, though on the railway line, has less rainfall than Kamishli, Amuda, or Dirbassiya because the mountains recede north into Turkey. Dry farming is profitable less than 20 kms. south of Ras el Ain.

IV. The Khabur Valley

123 The Khabur river, though rising in Turkey, is fed by springs in Ras el Ain and flows southward for about 150 kms. within the Jazirah before it enters the Mohafaza of the Euphrates below Markada.

244 For about 20-30 kms. below Ras el Ain, the land is used for 311 cereals, mainly barley, with varying degrees of success. But south of this area and down to Hassakeh, dry cultivation becomes risky. South of Hassakeh and to the east and west, dry cultivation becomes entirely out of the question because rainfall, already insufficient at Hassakeh, falls off sharply.

312 The inadequate rainfall is offset to a certain extent by the possibility of irrigation from the Khabur. Traces of old dams are apparent in several places, and canals which carried the waters from the dams are visible. History and legend leave no doubt that the valley was much more extensively exploited in former times than it is now.

312 Recently, when the price of rice rose during the War, farmers 406 from the cities of Jazirah in search of irrigated land, began renting lands along the Khabur and installing motors and pumps. The necessary outlay of capital for any project of adequate size was substantial, not less than LS 150,000, and the price of rice fell after 1946, so that perhaps not more than fifty irrigation projects existed up to 1949. It remained for the cotton boom of 1951 to boost this number to around 200 pumps.

The average size of pumps is 8" and the area irrigated by a pump of this size is around 500 dunums (125 acres). On some 312 projects, where land is available, this area for summer crops is 244 supplemented by an area twice this size in wheat and barley. 242 But lands on both sides of the river rise steeply and rarely can an owner of an irrigation project find enough lands to use the pumps

full time winter and summer. This is one of the reasons why most projects on the Khabur have been failures. The overhead costs are very heavy in relation to the land available.

The Government has an irrigation project partly in operation which will irrigate when completed an area of about 100,000 dunums (25,000 acres). Other projects are under study but their execution will be postponed indefinitely since the Government lacks the necessary capital.

To summarize, it would appear that not only all cultivable lands in Jazirah are already cultivated, but that farmers, in search of lands, have started using marginal lands with insufficient rainfall, and unless the price of cereals keeps at the level of last year there will follow in the coming two years a gradual decrease in the area planted, with heavy losses to individual farmers.

POPULATION OF JAZIRAH

During Turkish rule and up to the French occupation, Jazirah was a wasteland controlled by Bedouin tribes whose submission to the Turkish law was nominal.

I. The Arab Tribes

The tribes, dominated by Shammar, ruled the land and spoiled it, frustrating all attempts at agriculture. They lived on sheep and camel breeding and charged tribute from merchants for protection, each tribe within its boundaries. Moslem and Christian families from Mardin and Nisibin owned lands around what is now Kamishli, Amuda and Dirbassiya, and they traded with the tribes, buying their wool, samneh, and hides and supplying them with their needs and credit. The ownership of land for agriculture seems to have been incidental to the commercial activities of these families.

The tribal boundaries established during the Ottoman rule are still effective. Shammar claims the right of grazing from the Iraqi border at Tal Koshak to Tal Alu and south to Fadghami on the Khabur. There is another small concentration of a Shammar branch around Derbassiya known as Shammar Ezzor.

The neighbor of Shammar to the west is the Tay tribe. Its lands extend from Kubur el Bid and Kamishli south to Tal Brak. The tribe took to agriculture relatively early and in its area are some of the best lands of Jazirah.

619 To the south of Tay is the Jubur tribe. This tribe is composed
241 of two branches, the Jubur of Jagjag concentrated around Tal Brak
233 and south to Hassakeh, and the Jubur of the Khabur from north of Hassakeh to Fadghami. The Jagjag Jubur have taken to growing cereals besides grazing, but the Khabur Jubur find little employment in agriculture because their area is arid and those who do not work on irrigated lands are mostly sheep grazers.

619 Another big tribe migrating between the Euphrates and Jazirah
241 is the Baggaret el Jabal. This tribe is completely nomad. It spends
233 the winter in the plans toward Deir Ezzor and migrates in the summer to Jabal Abdel Aziz. It used to cross the Khabur to graze in
721 Jazirah but a dispute arose with Shammar Ezzor in 1949 over the ownership of some villages below Derbassiya, and supported by the Kurds, Shammar was able to drive Baggara back across the Khabur.

241 Of these tribes mentioned, Shammar is still mostly nomadic
621 though its lands in the north are good for agriculture. The Tay tribe is completely sedentary, Jubur Jagjag have become mostly sedentary, while Jubur Khabur are in a measure nomads because of the unsuitability of their lands, and the Baggara are completely nomads.

619 In tribal politics, Shammar stands alone. Tay and the Jubur
721 are traditional allies against Shammar. The Baggara are enemies of Shammar and friendly to Jubur. Raids of Shammar on Jubur are frequent especially in the region of Fadghami. The last big conflict between Shammar and Tay occurred in 1951 when over a hundred persons from the two parties were killed in a fight over the ownership of the lands south of the Rad.

6221 The Bedouin Sheiks of the different Arab tribes formerly re-
6621 ceived money grants from the Ottoman Government under the guise of expenses for the maintenance of law and order in their regions. These grants were in essence bribes to keep the Sheiks quiet. Unfortunately, the French continued this system, and relied on the Sheiks to control the tribesmen by giving the Sheik a fixed annual salary, each according to his importance. In this way, the Government implicitly renounced its right to deal directly with the individual Bedouin and dealt with him only through his Sheik.

This situation, which lasted until about a year ago, strengthened the Sheik enormously in the eyes of his tribesmen, and the Sheik
6224 invariably exploited the situation to his personal benefit. Thus,
425 in the Bedouin districts of Jazirah, the rapid development and
427

prosperity of the region during the last twelve years resulted in the benefit of the Sheiks who were quick to seize the meaning of the expansion in agriculture brought about by the introduction of the machines. They laid claim to vast areas of the best lands without opposition or control by the Government, and then rented these lands to machine owners, thereby getting rich at the expense of others and depriving the tribesmen of the possibility of tilling their own lands.

The concentration of land in the hands of the Sheik and his family is greatest in the Shammar tribe and in the Jubur whether though the Chiefs of the tribe own the best lands, but the Tay tribesmen took to agriculture earlier than either the Shammar or the Jubur and many Tay villages are owned by the peasants.

This short glimpse covers the Arab population of Jazirah, and we turn now to the other elements in the population.

II. The Kurds

The Kurds have been and are a vital element in the development of Jazirah. Their original country is the mountains north of the plain. Their language and customs have dominated the country so that even the city dwellers of Mardin and Nisibin speak Kurdish besides Arabic and Turkish. The Kurdish migration to Jazirah started in earnest after the failure of the Kurdish rebellion against the reforms of Mustafa Kamal. Some Kurdish tribal chiefs sentenced to death migrated with their tirbes to Syria. The French authorities welcomed them and they occupied the lands directly south of the border, greatly increasing in this way the number of Kurds already in the region. The Arab tribes saw their lands diminishing, but not being yet land conscious, they were satisfied to claim tribute from the Kurdish villages, which was paid for several years.

For the first time in perhaps nine hundred years, the French established law and order in Jazirah. The Kurds, farmers in their own country, began cultivating the plains. The land being fertile, the crops were good. The French authorities treated the Kurds well and the news of good crops and unbiased government treatment reached the Kurds just across the border. Migration became a continuous operation from the mountains to the villages of the plain. There were no obstacles to this movement either on the Turkish or the Syrian side, and the immigrants joined their cousins and relatives across the railway line. For this reason, and because a census was never taken, it is very difficult to estimate the number of Kurds in the Jazirah.

But proofs of their increase are the hundreds of new villages tilled by Kurds and built by them in the regions of Kubur el Bid, Amuda, and Derbassiya.

The Kurds like the Arabs, follow a tribal organization. Starting from the east, the Koshar tribe, mostly nomadic but recently turning to agriculture, dominates Jazirat ibn Amr, i.e., the region of Deink and Ain Diwar. The Koshar border Shammar on the south and they are on fighting terms because Nayef2 Pasha, chief of the Koshar, killed the brother of Dham, chief of Shammar. Next to the west is the Shitiya tribe around Kubur el Bid. This tribe is old in the region. Its members are Arab in their dress and, in contrast with all the other Kurdish tribes, they speak Arabic as well as Kurdish. Its lands lie west of Shammar and more within the Tay region but its relations with both are friendly.

Qamishli, which is a Tay region, includes villages of the Pinar Ali tribe. But west of Qamishli comes a solid bloc of 100% Kurdish villages extending for more than sixty kilometers and reaching to the west of Dirbassiya practically uninterrupted by any Arab village. This area is undoubtedly one of the most fertile of Jazirah. Within it, the Dakkuriya tribe is centered around Amuda, then follow the Kikiya around Dirbassiya, and the Milliya from Dirbassiya to Ras el Ain.

The Kurds are considered very good farmers. They plow and plant with mules but they rent combines for the harvest. This is because they have learned that combine harvest is more economical. The Kurd is also greatly praised for his character. He is truthful, honest, and upright in his dealings. He keeps his word and the merchants of the Jazir trust him completely. He is also clean in his home and in his dress, and though Bedouins reproach him for not being generous in his house, his standard of living is higher than the Bedouin and his villages are much cleaner.

The Kurds owe allegiance to their Agha who takes the place of the Bedouin Sheik. But this relationship is weaker than is the case of the Bedouins. The successive Governments did not give the Agha grants of money or similar authority over his tribesmen in the manner of the Sheik. The Kurds were considered from the start sedentary people subject directly to Government laws. That is why most of the Kurds own and till their lands in their own right.

III The Shashans

The Shashans, a Circassian tribe around Ras el Ain, complete the rural population of Jazirah. They migrated to Syria during the Ottoman rule and settled as mercenary soldiers. They are not good at agriculture and their lands are not fertile and do not compare with those of the Kurds.

IV. The Christians

The cities and commercial centers of Jazirah are an extra-ordinary mixture of races and creeds, but they are perhaps more than 80% Christian. This is true of Kubur el Bid, Qamishli, Amunda, Dirbassiya and Hassakeh.

As in the case of the Kurds, the Turkish massacres of the Christians in Mardin and the mountainous country around it started their migration to Jazirah. The Christians reached Jazirah without property or capital with which to begin. They settled mostly in the towns mentioned. A few of them already owned lands, others were traders and had previous relations with the Bedouins and Kurdish tribes. In a relatively short time the towns grew and flourished. The Christinas prospered from commerce before the expansion of agriculture. The tariff differences between Syria and Turkey on such important commodities as sugar, tea, and coffee and the intermingling of the Kurdish population on both sides of the frontier, made the Jazirah towns ideal for an extensive smuggling business.

The town Christians also served as middlemen to the merchants of Aleppo, who provided the money to lend to the Bedouins and Kurds or to buy the sheep, cattle and crops. This work on a commission or partnership basis coupled with the smuggling business proved profitable to the merchants of Jazirah, so that during the last twenty years many of them have become wealthy and have come to own real estate and agricultural lands and machinery without, however, abandoning their commercial activities with the merchants of Aleppo. In fact, the general prosperity and development of Jazirah has increased its need for the credit of Aleppo.

This picture of the Christian population of Jazirah is not complete without mention of the Christian peasants who migrated from the mountain villages and settled in the country. Though Christian and living in villages 100% Christian, some of them are Kurdish in their language, dress and customs. Some other villages are populated

by Syriac Christians who speak Syriac and Arabic. A few villages are completely Armenian. Most of these villages are around Kubur el Bid and Qamishli. These Christian peasants are very devout. They are also conservative and always remember the injuries inflicted upon them in Turkey. There is hardly a Christian family in the towns or villages which did not lose a relative or a friend in the massacres. Therefore they are always on their guard against their Moslem neighbors and are always suspicious of the Government. Their bitterness is not likely to disappear for some time to come, and is a factor to be considered in the political development of Jazirah.

The Christians of Jazirah belong to all creeds and denominations. The largest community in numbers and in importance is the Syriac Orthodox, followed by the Armanian Orthodox. There are Chaldeans, Syriac Catholics, Armanian Catholics, Protestants, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Nestorians. It should be mentioned that what determines the origin and affiliation of a man in Jazirah is not his language or dress, but his Church. Thus a Kurd who speaks only the Kurdish language, who lives like a Kurd on the same standard of living, and who dresses like one, is yet an Armenian or a Chaldean or a Jacobite because he belongs to one of these Churches. His original language and customs have been lost by living for ages in a foreign environment. That is why one finds in Jazirah and the mountains beyond it the only Christian Kurds in the world. But in reality they are not Kurds. They are Armenians or Syriacs or Chaldeans who have adopted the Kurdish language and their true nationality can be known only by referring to their Churches.

A more recent concentration of Christians in Jazirah is constituted by the Assyrians around Tal Tamr on the Khabur. Following the massacre of the Assyrians in Iraq in 1933 and their expulsion from that country, the French in Syria gave them asylum, and the League of Nations appropriated funds to settle them along the Khabur. Lands were granted to them and villages were built in which motors and pumps were installed for irrigation. Nevertheless during these 19 years all the efforts appear to have been useless. The ten thousand Assyrians who migrated to Syria lead a wretched life. Their motors are not in a working condition, their crops are not abundant and they are now trying to sell their lands. The reasons for such a condition may be found in the fact that the Assyrians are not farmers and the lands given to them are of a poor quality.

During the French Mandate, the Christians of Jazirah, with the memory of the Turkish massacres still fresh, and considering all

Moslems alike whether Turks or Arabs, and being suspicious of the surrounding Kurdish and Bedouin tribes, relied on the French for protection and became a tool in their hands to oppose the nationalistic aims of Syria. 6621 182

When in 1936 negotiations between France and Syria started for the conslusion of a treaty similar to the British-Iraqi treaty, French officials in Syria who were opposed to such a policy played on the fears of the Jazirah Christians and incited them to rebellion. They rose up and drove out the Syrian public employees and proclaimed Jazirah independent. They were supported by a majority of the Kurds who feared Bedouin domination in case Syria became independent, and by some Bedouin Sheiks notably the Sheiks of Tay and of Jagjag Jubur. Dham and Mizor, Chiefs of Shammar, and the Sheik of Khabur Jubur, remained loyal to the Syrian Government. The problem was solved when the negotiations in Paris failed and the French resumed their authority in 1937. All remained quiet during the war, and when Syria became independent through the intervention of the British in 1945, no one in Jazirah made any difficulty. 648 669 619

The population of Jazirah was estimated at the end of 1951 to be 162,000. This estimate can only be tentative because no census was taken and the number of unregistered persons is large. The Shammars are mostly unregistered and so are the Juburs. The same holds true of the Kurds who have migrated from Turkey. 1624 659 361

The number of members in each denomination is unknown, as is the number of town dwellers. Qamishli is estimated to have 30,000 inhabitants, Amuda and Derbassiya 8-10,000 each, and Hassakeh above 10,000. Kurds probably outnumber the Bedouins in Jazirah.

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CROPS AND AGRICULTURE IN JAZIRAH

I. Dry Farming

Dry farming is by far the most important activity of Jazirah. The first tractor and combine were introduced in 1936 by Shahine Bey Maluf of Zahleh. Before that time agriculture was the business of the peasants. The town inhabitants of Jazirah took no interest in it. The area cultivated was restricted to a few kilometers south of the railway line in what is called the Old Villages. The political troubles in 1936-37 and the low prices of wheat and barley before the War did not encourage capitalists inside Syria to invest their money in Jazirah. Furthermore, agricultural machinery was new to most people who did not understand its economics or how to run it.

a. Expansion in the Use of Machinery 1936-1952

The War doubled the price of wheat in its second year. The crop of 1940 was sold for LS 50-55 a ton at Aleppo. The French bought it for LS 120 in 1941. The Office des Cereales Panifiables (O. C. P.) fixed the price at LS 350 in 1943. During these years the dollar was available at the official rate of LS 2. 20 and importation of machinery from the U. S. was possible. The number of tractors increased to about 60 in the winter of 1943.

The crop of 1943 was exceptionally good and the O. C. P. imported some 50 tractors and a similar number of combines which reached Jazirah during the harvest season. The machines were first rented to the farmers and then sold to them. They represented the first large-scale importation of machinery to Jazirah.

Importation of machinery in the following two years became difficult as a result both of limited availability and of dollar shortage. But by the end of the War dollars became again available at the official rate and large numbers of tractors were imported in 1945 and 1946. The importation of agricultural machinery has become a steady and continuous flow in spite of the sharp rise in the dollar rates and the price of wheat, though below 1943, still makes large-scale exploitation profitable. Recently the Government through the Agricultural Bank has helped the farmers import and buy on

407 439 654 482 installments some 200 tractors of which the share for Jazirah was 71. This brings the number of tractors and combines to about 400 and 300, respectively.

It appears that the present number of tractors and combines fulfills the demands of the Jazirah if no new region such as the Rad is opened for cultivation. This is demonstrated by the fall in the rent of agricultural machinery, for whereas rent of the combine cost 33% of the crop in 1936 and between 22-25% from 1940 to 1948, the charge dropped to less than 20% in 1949 and 1950 and to 15% in 1952. This last share leaves a moderate and reasonable profit to the combine owner and it will not be possible for him to reduce prices greatly.

The same is true of tractor rents. The average charge for disc plowing a dunum at present is LS . 90-1. 10 in the region of Qamishli. This is a competitive charge and cannot be much reduced.

Therefore, the conclusionis that the number of agricultural machines in Jazirah is likely to remain stable with importation every year to replace those machines which become obsolete.

b. Expansion in the Area Cultivated

311 The first regions to be tilled by tractors in Jazirah were Qamishli, Amuda and Dirbassiya. When no more lands were available around them farmers after 1946 went east to Tal Koshak on the border of Iraq.

After 1949 all the region from Tal Koshak to Dirbassiya became cultivated and farmers had to move to less productive areas around the Rad, south of Tel Brak, and in Ras el Rin. At the present time, taking Tal Koshak on the east and 30 kilometers west of Dirbassiya as the western boundary and south to the Rad and to Hassakeh, there is not a single patch uncultivated on a two year basis. In the first two years the region between Ras el Ain and Rakka was opened for cultivation by Asfar and Najjar family. This year the first crop grown on lands midway between the two towns appeared. The yield of barley was 5 to 6 times the amount planted. Around Qamishli the barley yield was 10 to 12.

311 491 The region of Deirik and Ain Divar or Jaziratibn Amr was long neglected despite its fertility because of impossible communications. No roads existed and the abundant rainfall stopped all transport for six months of the year. Within the last two years the Government

has started the construction of a road which is not yet finished, but which permits trucks to reach Deirik in all seasons. Farmers flowed into the region following the opening of the road and began populating it. The present Minister of National Economy, Munir Diab, and Mr. Amin Nazif, formerly Secretary General of the Ministry of agriculture, own lands in the region.

c. Volume of Seeds and Crops

The main dry farming crop in Jazirah is wheat with "black" barley a poor second. It is estimated that about 50-60,000 tons of wheat are planted every year and some five thousand tons of barley. The average yield of wheat is 6-7 times per unit planted which gives a yearly crop of some 350-400,000 tons, of this quantity, 85-100,000 tons are needed for local consumption and for seed. This leaves about 250-300,000 tons available for export in an average year. Calculating this quantity at the price of LS 170 in the field free of all expenses, it means a revenue of LS 51 million per year to Jazirah with seeds and provisions already accounted for or about LS 250 per capita.

d. Difficulties in the Way of Agricultural Development

Agriculture in Jazirah suffers from many obstacles and hindrances which the Government can remedy with some careful thought and planning. The difficulties connected with land ownership and tenure and with credit and transport will be discussed separately, but other obstacles will be mentioned here below:

1. There is no agricultural station in the important wheat growing centers of Jazirah to record the amount of rainfall and the mean temperatures to guide the farmers.

2. The Jazirah is subject in most years to a heat wave during the month of May which destroys 25-35% of the crop. The only remedy is to introduce strains of wheat which mature before the period of the heat wave. Although the problem and the remedy are known to the Government, no effort has yet been made either to import new

165 654 strains or to cultivate them in the Government stations in Syria.

435 651 185 654 3. The price of fuel is a major obstacle to agriculture and to the possibility of competing on the world market. While the price of a ton of mazut in the Euphrates area in Iraq is LS 21 its price in Kamishli is LS 175, i.e., more than eight times as much. The same is true to a lesser degree of the price of gasoline and kerosene due to excessive Government taxation. The Government used to refund to farmers a part of the taxes on gasoline and kerosene used in agricultural machinery, but it has recently abolished even this meager help.

407 435 4. The sale of agricultural machinery and especially of its spare parts needs supervision. Agents deliberately create scarcities during the period of greatest need so as to get the highest prices possible.

435 489 5. The system of transport from the combine to the stations needs complete revision. At the present time, farmers are obliged to use jute bags on the combines to fill with wheat. The bag is bought for LS 2 but is sold as wheat in Aleppo. Since the bag weighs 1.25 kilograms and the price of a kilogram of wheat is 26 piasters, the farmer gets less than 30 piasters for every 200 he invests in a bag. This means a loss of LS 14 per ton, without counting all the extra expense of handling on the combine, then on to the truck, then to the railway station, then on the railway and, lastly, discharging at Aleppo Station, then transporting by truck to the merchant's store. All this handling, necessitated by the use of jute bags is paid by the farmer to the amount of LS 4 per ton. Added to the loss on the bag it makes a total loss of LS 15. All this could be saved if transport could be so organized as to eliminate the need for jute bags.

435 656 6. The fluctuation and uncertainty of prices is a major obstacle to the continued progress of agriculture in Jazirah. The farmer who plants his seeds in October does not know whether he will sell his crop in July for ten piasters a kilo or for thirty. He lacks information on world prices and merchants take advantage of that and of the fact that he is constantly in need of money to buy a major share of the crop at low prices. But even if the farmer were informed about world markets, Government regulations constantly hamper the free opera-

operation of world trade in a way that has always worked to the detriment of the farmer. The Government has adopted and persists in the view that the farmers as a class are alone responsible for feeding the town population at reduced prices. The Government and its organizations like the O. C. P. and later the Mira have always forced the farmers to hand over large quantities of wheat at prices below the market level. Even the present Grains Office is doing the same thing in a different way. It stipulates that exporters of wheat should deliver to the Office half the quantity exported at 23 piasters per kilo in Aleppo, i. e., at a rate 25% cheaper than the market price. This reflects in the end on the price paid by the merchant to the farmer. This unjust imposition of the Office is in fact borne by the farmer and not by the merchant. If the Government feels its responsibility for the provision of enough wheat for the population at reduced prices, the burden should be shared by all tax-payers without distinction. The farmer should get the full market price and the deficit should be covered from the general tax receipts. This solution, while freeing the farmer from a chronic injustice, is not the answer to the price problems. Since the Grains Office has become a permanent institution, the farmer needs to know as far in advance as practicable what prices he is to expect for his crops. The major function of the Office should be not to devise means for collecting wheat from the farmer at reduced prices, nor to provide revenue for the Government by creating a monopoly of wheat export, but to stabilize prices and guard the farmer against sharp fluctuations from one year to another. This it must do by announcing its readiness to buy wheat at fixed prices for the next two crops, at least without claiming a monopoly. That is, the farmer should be guaranteed a minimum price for his next two crops and left to profit from free prices if the market situation allows it.

A concrete example of how Government policy is reducing the prices for the farmer, is the new decree authorizing the export of 200, 000 tons of wheat against delivery of 100, 000 tons to the Grains Office at LS 230 in Aleppo.

The exporter will proceed to do his account, in the following manner. The price paid by Italy is said to be $98 which amounts to LS 350. For three tons of wheat of which two are exported and one delivered to the Grains Office, the merchant will receive LS 930 or an average of LS 310 per ton. In order to make a profit of

425 15 percent he must buy his wheat at the port of export for LS 203-5.
656 This means about LS 252 at Aleppo for the farmer of Jazirah. And this is the price at which the market is stabilized at present, while if this imposition did not exist the farmer would have sold his wheat for LS 300-350.

648 7. The discussion of prices brings about a consideration of mar-
489 kets for the surplus Syrian wheat. During the French Mandate, and up to March 1949, Syria and Lebanon formed one economic unit. The first independent regime under Shukri Quwatly, which lasted until the first coup d'etat in 1949, preserved this unity though some friction did exist between the two Governments. President Quwatly was emphatic about the necessity of this union. Then politicians mentioned to him the alleged advantages which Lebanon had over Syria in the partnership, he invariably replied that the benefit from the partnership to the national Arab idea transcends in importance any material disadvantage resulting to Syria.

But aside from this political consideration, the union did present specific advantages to the Syrian farmer. Lebanon imports yearly about 80,000 tons of wheat. This is approximately one-third the quantity exported by Syria. Further, Lebanon had a customs duty of 50 per cent on foreign wheat other than Syrian. This meant that the Syrian farmer was assured a market for part of his crop at prices higher than world prices, besides selling Lebanon cheese, samneh, vegetables and fruit.

Whatever the economic advantages according to Syria in its new policy of separation from Lebanon, and they are highly doubtful, the Syrian farmer has lost a sure market.

In fact, the question of economic separation between Syria and Lebanon has never been examined as a purely economic propositon, but has always been mixed with considerations of national prestige and alleged Syrian economic subservience to Lebanon. This highly emotional language was designed to confuse the issue for the benefit of industrial groups, especially textile manufacturers who were crowded by Lebanese competition.

425 8. Another misconception shared by the Government and most
439 of the people is that Syrian prices of wheat should be governed by world prices. The fact is that Jazirah wheat can never normally

compete on world markets. The cost of production of wheat in the Jazirah by machinery is much higher than the cost of production in the major producing countries of the world, such as Canada, the U. S. A. and Australia. Since the average annual export of wheat in Syria does not exceed 250-300 thousand tons, and it is Jazirah which produces this exportable surplus, the rest of Syria taking care of internal consumption, the costs of Jazirah production become the determining factors. Some causes of the higher cost of production in Jazirah have been mentioned above.. Others, such as the difficult transportation will be discussed later. But there is no doubt that unless the different defects controlling Jazirah agriculture are removed, and they can be removed by Government enlightened action, production will drop sharply when world prices decline as they might do if world tension is removed.

e. Two Types of Agriculture in Jazirah

It should be stated that two different methods of production prevail in Jazirah, cultivation by peasants using mules and cultivation by machinery.

1. Peasant cultivation accounts for perhaps 50-60 per cent of the crop, and machinery cultivation for the remainder. Both types suffer from some of the obstacles mentioned above, such as bad credit and transportation systems, bad seed, insecurity as to prices, and lack of agricultural guidance. But inspite of all, the peasant farmer will continue to plow his tract of land no matter how circumstances change because farming is his occupation and he knows no other. The crop he produces is enough for him and his family, and the surplus he sells to the Jazirah towns to feed the city people. The drop in prices will simply mean a lower standard of living for him and his family.

2. The cultivator by machinery suffers from causes in addition to those of the peasant. He is a capitalist who has invested his mone in machinery, seeds, fuel and wages and he has to show a profit at the end of the year to pay for his investment and to live at a decent standard. His investment should give him returns comparable to other fields of endeavor, otherwise he will not continue in his presen

job. It is this mechanized farmer-investor who has produced the surplus wheat exportable from Jazirah. Any attempt to reduce his activity by limiting the area of land cultivated by him, or by artificially reducing the prices of his crops for the benefit of the State monopoly, or by ignoring his demands for low production costs, will result in his leaving the job for other occupations. It should be noted also that this type of farmer is in most cases not tied to the land. He usually rents the land he cultivates, and even if he owned land, it is only a small fraction of the area he plants annually. It is always easy for him to rent his lands to peasant farmers and go back to the city.

3. Estimate of a Capitalist Agricultural Enterprise and the Area it needs: A complete outfit of agricultural machinery belonging to a farmer in Jazirah usually consists of the following. A fifty horsepower tractor, a disc plow, a cultivator, a drill, a combine either tractor drawn or self-propelled, a jeep, a truck , and a regular repair shop for immediate repairs in the field. He will have a mechanic and two drivers on an annual basis. The number will rise to about ten during the plowing, seeding, and harvest seasons. This means an outlay of LS 100, 000 in capital to which is added LS 25,-000 for the price of seed, fuel, and miscellaneous expenses. To meet the depreciation on the machinery, cover the annual expenses and interest, and earn a profit, the farmer must plant as large an area of land as his equipment can handle. It is found that he has to plant some 5, 000 dunums annually or better still 6, 000 in order to find his occupation remunerative. To do this, he has to own or rent land double this area since all cultivation in Jazirah is on a two year rotation basis.

II. Irrigated Agriculture

The Encyclopedia Britannica relates that the region of Nisibin, i. e. Qamishli, was up to the eleventh century planted with fruit trees and that it lost its orchards due to forcible conversion to wheat imposed by the Caliph, as well as ravages by the Bedouin tribes.

a. The Region of Deirik

241 In the region of Deirik, the Zarkan river and numerous springs
490 in the villages make irrigation possible over vast areas. The region
312 began to be developed recently when the road was partly constructed. Rice is an old staple, but in the last two years it have given place to cotton. However, rice may resume its former place since cotton diseases have become so widespread.

b. The Jarrah

The Jarrah river flows through Kubur el Bid and irrigates the country around it. Its waters were used for rice plantations, and recently for cotton. In winter its waters flow into the Rad.

c. The Jagjag

133 The main river of northern Jazirah is the Jagjag. Its sources are about thirty kilometers north of Kamishli, in a gorge in Turkey. It flows through Nisibin and Kamishli, crosses the Jazirah plain and empties in the Khabur at Hassakeh. Its total length is about 100 kms. and its average flow is 3 cubic meters per second.

3121 In Turkey and Kamishli, the river has several beds. The Turks,
425 unable to exploit it fully in their country because of its short flow there, follow the practice of changing the river from bed to bed in the summer months, so that farmers in Jazirah do not know when the water will be available to them. This uncertainty has lead the villages which have a right to the water to sell their rights for one or more years to individuals on good terms with the Turkish authorities. These individuals in their turn bribe the Turks to direct the waters in the bed which leads to their lands. One family in particular has obtained a sort of monopoly on the waters of the Jagjag in Qamishli. The Asfar-Najjars buy the water rights from the villages for nominal sums and then try to reach an understanding with the Turks. Since they have one or two competing groups in Qamishli, the Turks usually get paid by both parties and satisfy none entirely. The Asfars manage however to get the biggest share.

3124 Such an unstable situation does not lead to steady irrigation
241 development along the lines of orchard planting. The farmer is lucky if he can grow one crop of rice or cotton with the present

fluctuations in water flow. Up to 1950, all the water of Jagjag was used for growing rice. In 1950-51, more emphasis was given to cotton. This year it is half cotton and half rice. 312 241

The Turks started a project for diverting all the waters of the Jagjag from Syria to Turkey. They began building tunnels to carry one quarter of the waters cast above Kubur el Bid, and the rest to the plains above Amuda and Dirbassiya. The Syrian Government objected and negotiations began in Ankara. The Syrians believe that they have reached an understanding with the Turkish authorities to divide the river waters equally. The Turks did not sign the agreement, claiming that they want a full agreement on water rights covering all common rivers and especially the Orontes. They are afraid that Syria might use all the waters of the Orontes in its irrigation projects. Since Syria holds this arm, the Jagjag dispute will be solved equitably. 312 648

It is difficult to estimate the area irrigated yearly by the Jagjag. The waters are used only for summer crops, and last year about thirty thousand dunums were planted to cotton. When the plantation is rice the area is nearer to ten thousand dunums. There is of course always a certain amount of land devoted to vegetable growing for the needs of the city. 312 241

d. Underground Water

Recently a few enterprising farmers tried to solve the problem of dependency upon Turkey for irrigation water by digging for water on their own lands. An Armenian outfit from Aleppo with a boring machine of local construction dug several wells in the region of Qamishli and Amuda. Three of the wells in the villages of Tal Ahmad and Tal Anbar near Kamishli were successful. Water to run a 4-inch pump was found at a depth of 18 meters. The other holes around Amuda were not so successful. Water was not found at a depth of 70 meters. These experiments are of course inconclusive and sufficient underground water may be found to be abundant in Jazirah. Further studies are needed. 312

a. The Khabur

The largest source of irrigation water in Jazirah is undoubtedly the Khabur. Its average flow is 52 cubic meters per second which 133

makes it the biggest river in Syria after the Euphrates. A short description of the Khabur valley was given earlier and the great possibilities of the river remain undeveloped. Unlike the Euphrates, especially in its lower reached, the Khabur valley is narrow. The alluvial plain does not extend more than five hundred meters on each bank in most places and then the land rises to a height of 10-50 meters over a distance of severl kilometers.

The alluvial plain along each bank has been more or less irrigated and planted by primitive methods such as the kard and the naqourah or dulab since old times. The kard can irrigate about fifteen dunums and the naqourah, if in good condition, can produce a flow of less than two inches of water and raise it to a height of a maximum six meters which is the diameter of the wheel. More prosperous Bedouins combine two or three naqourahs on the same axis and got a flow of about 3-5 inches. The naqourah is evidently a cheap way to raise water, but its construction is costly. Assuming that a Bedouin wants to build a naqourah on a new site, he has to erect a sort of a dam with stones on about half the river's width to raise the river's level and direct its flow towards his naqourah. Since stone is not abundant along the Khabur and has to be carried long distances, it becomes the job of specialized carpenters to construct the wheel, erect its supports, and balance it. This may cost another LS 1,500. The carpenter who constructs the wheel or naqourah becomes responsible for its maintenance and is paid yearly 11 percent of the yield of the land irrigated in lieu of wages.

The staple crops of the Khabur were formerly wheat in winter and sorghum in summer. Sorghum was preferred to every other summer crop because it provides food for both man and beast. Lately, the naqourah peasants began planting sesame and in the last two years cotton, but reverted this year to sorghum and sesame as the main summer crops.

Unlike the Kurdish or even the Bedouin peasant of northern Jazirah, the Khabur peasant is very poor and primitive. Rarely does he own one cow to use for plowing. Usually two or more farmers join to provide one team. For this reason the strip of land which he can cultivate for wheat or sesame does not exceed 20-30 dunums, of which half the yield goes to the owner of the land who provides water. This is to compare with 250-300 dunums cultivated by the Kurdish farmer, of which he has to pay only the rent of the combine for the harvest.

Irrigation by pump started with the rice boom in 1945 and expanded with the cotton boom of 1951. It was hit severly by the crop failure of last year and the flood of this spring, and the future of the Khabur appears dim. This is because as previously mentioned, the original amount of capital used to construct a fair sized project is large, amounting to about LS 150-200 thousand. Such a project can irrigate with two 10-inch pumps or their equivalent about 2, 500 dunums of summer crops and double the area in wheat and barley. The project will have one main canal 1 1/2-3 1/3 meters higher than ground level made entirely of earth or lined with cement to carry the water a distance of 1-3 kilometers depending on the lay of the ground, several subsidisary canals, buildings for the motors, the agricultural machinery, and the laborers.

Evidently, in order to get the best returns on the capital invested, the farmer needs to exploit to the utmost the capacity of his pumps. otherwise he will be leaving his capital idle. In this case, he will need to cultivate, on a rotation basis, 2, 500 dunums of summer crops and 5, 000 dunums of wheat and barley. But on most of the irrigation projects of the size mentioned, the area of the lands which can be irrigated is less than 1, 500 dunums in all. The surrounding lands are all higher than the main leading canal and can not be reached except by a much greater outlay of capital. This means that the farmer has to extract from an area of 1, 500 dunums, of which one-third lies fallow every year, enough profit in five to eight years, which is the average duration of the lease, to compensate him for his yearly efforts, to pay interest on the capital and to regain his investment. This should mean a net annual profit of about 45, 000 LS or LS 45 per dunum, and experience has proved that it can not be done.

The alterntive to pump irrigation on the Khabur is irrigation by gravity in works similar to that of Tal Mughass. And the Khabur lends itself in many places to such project. Mr. Delbes, agricultural advisor to Syria during the French Mandate, knows at least of three projects studied by the French High Commissariat, to build dams and derivation canals between Ras el Ain and Hassakeh. The largest one among them is to carry the water west to the region of Jabal Abdel Aziz and irrigate a very large area.

Another dam site studied by the French is at Sab'Skour. Further south in the region of Fadghami a site was selected to store the

3121 6S4 flood waters and distribute them in summer. All these studies, and it is not known how detailed they are, are believed to be kept at the French Legation in Beirut.

Such projects cost a lot of money, and Syria may not be able to construct them for many years. A quicker and less expensive policy is to combine elements from the system of irrigation by pumps and the system of gravity irrigation. This is the policy followed in Egypt, to dig canals conveying water from the river to areas ten or more kilometers removed and ten to twenty meters higher than the water level. Such dirt canals can be dug cheaply by modern machinery, and the farmers will then be authorized to install pumps on the canals. Since the greatest cost of an irrigation project is the construction of the main canal above the ground level, the method recommended removes the need for the elevated canals and the farmer can install his pump directly on the land to be irrigated. In this way, the farmer is spared also the loss due to evaporation and absorption on the elevated canal.

This is the quickest method to expand irrigated agriculture along the Khabur, and it may also prove in the long run cheaper to the country and the farmer than the elaborate dams and derivation canals contemplated by the Government. Such a conclusion needs, of course, more detailed engineering studies and comparison of costs before it becomes final.

III. The Problem of Monoculture

243 Wheat and barley are by far the main crops of the Jazirah and with the exception of the Khabur valley, they are practically the only crops. What the irrigated lands of Kubur el Bid and Qamishli produce in summer crops does not compare in quantity or in value with the wheat crop.

243 571 For this reason, Jazirah suffers from all the defects of monoculture. When the wheat crop is good and the prices are high land values increase, the farmers are enabled to pay most of their debts and to raise their standard of living by building better residences, buying furniture, making more trips with their families to the interior cities of Syria and Lebanon, sending their children to schools in Aleppo and Beirut, and increasing their welfare in general. But

when the wheat crop fails, as it did last year, there is great hardship in all of the Jazirah. Debts remain largely unpaid, the value of land falls off sharply, and interest rates become unbearable

The failure of a crop in Jazirah brings more hardship than is the case in other Mohafazas because Jazirah, with all the money revenue which accrues to it in a good year, has not arrived yet at the stage where it can save a part of this income to use in bad years. All the money revenue is immediately reinvested in machinery and in expansion of the area planted with additonal sums borrowed from the banks or from Aleppo merchants.

The point is reached where further expansion has become difficult, and the situation will become more or less stabilized so that some of the income will be put aside for emergencies in the coming few years. But even when savings reach a high figure, the problem of monoculture is not solved.

Jazirah at present does not produce the necessary vegetables and fruit for its own consumption. It imports them from Aleppo, Homs and Damascus. That is why the cost of living in the town of the Jazirah is one of the highest in Syria. Aside from the price of meat and samneh, everything including room and house rents, is more expensive than in the other big towns of Syria. Even flour is sold to bakers by the town municipalities at the same price for which it is sold in Damascus.

In former times, however, Jazirah produced great amounts of fruit, vegetables and dairy products. Its lands are very well suited to raising cattle and beef, an employment more profitable than wheat growing. A diversification in the use of land will make for a more balanced and prosperous economy in Jazirah. But the Jazirah farmers are not to be blamed entirely for the kind of agriculture prevailing. Circumstances beyond their control, connected primarily with the problems of land ownership and tenure, have largely imposed this type of monoculture upon them. These problems will be discussed in the following section, but it can be said in passing that the farmer cannot be expected to invest money in buildings for cattle raising, or in digging wells to provide irrigation for vegetable growing, or in planting orchards on lands to which he has no title or whose title is subject to constant disputes over boundaries with the neighbors and lately by decree-law 96 with the State.

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LAND OWNERSHIP IN JAZIRAH

At the beginning of the French Mandates, more than 95% of 423
Jazirah lands were public domain, and it is difficult to understand the land situation now without a study of the laws governing the acquisition of public domain as enacted by the Ottomans and partly amended by the French, and which remained in effect till January 31, 1952, when decree-law 96 was issued.

I. The Land Laws Prior to January 1952

The law recognized two categories of public domain:

1. Lands registered in the name of the Government in the same way that a private owner has his lands registered in the Department of Tabo, or Land Registration Department. The Government holds deeds for those lands.

2. All unoccupied lands, waste lands called "dead lands," in Syria which are not registered in the name of anybody and for which the Government holds no deeds.

The first category of public domain is very rare in Jazirah. 423
Suffice it to say that ownership of these lands can be acquired by 425
public auction sales, or by renting them from the Government after a price has been fixed, and paying the price in yearly installments while doing the improvements specified in the contract or sale. The operation is known in Syrian law under the same name of "rent with a promise of sale."

The second category of public domain is by far the larger. And the law provided different methods for acquiring it suited to the small peasant and to the big farmer.

The the small peasant, the law, accorded him five hundred dunums which he could own freely without any payment provided he informed the competent authorities of his intentions and obtained in advance an authorization from the Department of Registration. He could then go ahead and cultivate the area allotted to him, and after 10 years, he could obtain legal title to it, without any payment.

This method did not enjoy great favor with the peasants of Jazirah for several reasons. In the first place, the ignorant peasant, whether Bedouin or Kurd, found difficulty in applying for the advance authorization and in fulfilling the formalities required for receiving it. Secondly, the peasant aspired often to a larger area than that allowed to him by this method. Thirdly, the peasant did not trust the Government, from which he was used only to oppression and corruption during Turkish rule. He was afraid that by the end of the ten years he would not be granted the promised land. Fourthly, the peasant did not trust his neighbors, his Sheik, or his Agha. He was afraid that during these ten years and before he received the deed for his land one of them would manage to drive him away and get the land for himself.

For all these reasons combined, the peasant wanted a way that enabled him to receive more than 500 dunums of land, that rid him of the necessity of applying to Government officials, and that put in his hands an undisputable title to his land in a reasonably short time.

All these desires were satisfied if the peasant followed the second method of land acquisition described by law. The law provided that, without previous authorization, anyone can acquire title to waste land if he cultivates it and pays to the State so much per dunum. No limit was set on the area which a farmer could acquire in this way. The State was interested in extending agriculture and offered encouragement to those who reclaimed land. The area which a farmer could own in this way was limited only by his ability to cultivate and plant. He could at any moment ask the appropriate officials to make a survey of his cultivated area, ask them to fix a price per dunum, pay the price, and get his deed in the first year of cultivation. In the nineteen forties, the price per dunum was usually set at LS50.

II. Partnership in Land Between the Tribesmen and the Tractor Owner

To avail himself of these advantages, the peasant had recourse to the city dweller owner of a tractor. The usual situation was that a group of peasants have occupied a large area of about 10,000 dunums within the boundaries of their tribe, of which they were able to cultivate only some 2000. They offered the tractor owner half the 10,000 dunums on condition that he brings his tractor to the village

and cultivate all the area. Usually the tractor owner took upon himself also to pay all Government dues and the price of all the land as fixed by the Government, and to hand the deeds for the 5000 dunums to the peasants in one or two years.

In this way, the peasants got 5000 dunums instead of the 2000 they were able to cultivate by their own means, they received their deeds in one or two years instead of in ten, their partner from the city became responsible for helping them resist any encroachments on their land from the Agha, Sheik or neighbors, and they received their deeds free from any dues.

Around 1944, when demand for land increased, peasants began receiving money from their city partners besides all the obligations assumed by him and mentioned above.

The French wisely strove to encourage agriculture in Jazirah, and had finding that the procedure used for the acquisition of land was long and complicated, formed a Special Committee and empowered it to grant land and issue valid deeds while abrogating some of the usual processes of law. Some lands were distributed in this manner and the French were accused of using their influence to the benefit of their political sympathizers. But in general, the Committee did a good job of stabilizing and legalizing the ownership of some lands.

The great majority of the land owned by tractor owners in Jazirah was acquired in partnership with the peasants. A few of the inhabitants of Mardin and Nisibin had titles to lands from the Ottoman Government. In rare instances, a few individuals went to the Land Registration Official in Turkey and bought from him forfeited deeds covering very large areas. But in general the titles in the hands of property owners in Jazirah were acquired in the manner described above.

Because there was no survey in the Ottoman Empire, Ottoman land laws, adopted and amended by the French and applied to Syria, considered that the boundaries mentioned in the deed were the determining factor in case of dispute, and that the area mentioned in dunums was of no importance since the surveying services did not reach all parts of the country. For this reason, all deeds in Syria give the boundaries as exactly as possible, and give an approximate estimate of the area in dunums, except where surveying has remedied the situation.

III. Lands With Title Cover Only 30% of Jazirah

It should not be understood from the above discussion that all the lands of Jazirah are occupied by persons having title to them. Perhaps as much as 70% of the lands are occupied by persons claiming ownership but having no legal title. And here resides the great problem of Jazirah which continues to retard its development and prosperity. 423 185

There is nothing that can stabilize conditions in an agricultural society, increase confidence, improve credit, diversify the types of cultivation, increase property values, and encourage the improvement of land by long-term projects of irrigation and farm construction, like a secure and stable system of land ownership.

It is the misfortune of Jazirah that successive Governments since Syrian independence have not only ignored this basic fact, but have done everything in their power to make the stabilization of the land problem in Jazirah more remote.

Before the beginning of 1952 land registration in Jazirah suffered from all the delays, expenses, corruption, and hindrances prevalent in other parts of Syria. Moreover, as a frontier zone, land registration was subject to an authorization by the Chief of State, and in the last three years registration of land acquired through cultivation for a period of ten years was stopped by decision of the Council of Ministers.

The governing idea behind all these restrictions is that individuals are usurping the public domain illegally. While this may be true in some cases, the measures taken to correct the situation are out of proportion to the problem at hand and are applied not only to usurpers out to land owners of good faith as well. The result is that three-quarters of the lands of Jazirah belonging mostly to peasants and medium owners are unregistered.

IV. Decree-law 96

Decree-law 96 starts with this idea of correcting the usurpations of the public domain, and adds to it the concept of social justice as exemplified by the policy of encouraging small land holdings and dividing the large estates. 423 185 656

A. Contradictory Policies of the Government

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The decree is interesting in its application to Jazirah and it seems that the Government there follows two contradictory policies diametrically opposed and antagonistic to each other. On the one hand, decree No. 510, dated March 23, 1950, and decree No. 80, dated January 23, 1952, facilitate the importation and distribution of powerful agricultural machinery among the farmers in general and those in particular of Jazirah. The use of agricultural machinery goes hand-in-hand with the extensive cultivation of large areas of land to make their employment economic. On the other hand, and surprisingly, only eight days after the promulgation of the decree for the distribution of agricultural machinery, decree-law 90 dated January 31, 1952, prevents the farmer from owning or renting (in its interpretative communique) more than 1500 dunums in Jazirah an acreage which does not lend itself to economic tractor cultivation.

The decree has been in operation now for seven months and its application should have vindicated the two principles on which it depends, viz 1 to correct the usurpations of the public domain, and to divide the big estates among the needy farmers.

Assuming that the policy of the State is to encourage small ownership of land to be tilled by the farmer using cows or mules, and that the importation of heavy agricultural machinery was a mistake not to be repeated, the logical procedure by the Government would have been to establish simplified processes and register in the name of peasants pieces of 1500 dunums each to which they have a right both in the old and the new law. The Government has had ample time during these eight months to enforce its own decree-law and register tens of thousands of 1500 dunum pieces and give their users legal title to them. Had the Government done that, it would have found the problem greatly simplified. The Kurdish and Bedouin family has in general three to four adult members working on the common land. According to decree 96, each member has a right to 1500 dunums. The Government would have to grant them extra land to reach its quota.

B. Size of Land Holdings in Jazirah

The point is that, had the Government proceeded in this manner, the practical result would have been the stabilization and legalization of the present small and medium ownership.

423 185 656 This, according to the following table borrowed from Gib Report, page 20, would have legalized the situation in 57% of the Jazirah lands, leaving 9% as public domain, and only 34% not complying with the terms of the decree.

Small Holdings Less than 10 hectares	Medium Holdings 10-100 hectares	Large Holdings Over 100 hectares	State-Owned Lands
56,000	528,000	343,000	96,000
5%	52%	34%	9%

Instead, the Government's only contribution to the solution of the land problem was to prohibit entirely the registration of any land from January 1952 to the present time.

If the Gibb statistics are correct, and they are presumably taken from Government sources, the land reform in Jazirah contemplated by decree 96 concerns only 34% of the region's entire area.

In dealing with this portion of Jazirah, the Syrian Government has to decide on its agricultural policy. It must make up its mind whether it wants to divide the big estates, with or without compensation, and distribute them in small lots to farmer families using mules, thus increasing the population of Jazirah greatly, so that its production of wheat will not much exceed its local consumption, and depriving Syria of the income derived from its present yearly export. Alternatively it must decide that Syria wants to increase its exports of wheat by extending the use of agricultural machinery whose effective use requires holdings of more than 1,000 hectares.

Coming back to the discussion of the 34% of Jazirah lands in holdings of over 100 hectares, the Government should have proceeded immediately, after the promulgation of the law, to their surveying and delimitation to get a clear picture of the situation. Without venturing into exact statistics, the following description is to the point. It endeavors to show that excessive land ownership is limited to relatively few individuals and that the problem is better solved by the Government by considering each case on its merits. The problem of the Government is further facilitated because the tribal Sheiks claim that they hold the lands for their tribe and not for themselves. The Government should have asked the Sheiks to proceed to the distribution of these lands under its supervision.

423 The large holdings are owned by the Agha of Koshar around
471 Deirik, the Sheiks of Shammar from Tal Koshak to Kubur el Bid and south to the Rad, the Sheik of Tay and several of Tay subdivision chiefs, Asfar-Najjar family of Qamishli, the Aghas of the Kurdish tribes (three in number), and two Sheiks of the Jubur. This list is not exhaustive but it is true that not more than fifty individuals in Jazirah have holdings of more than 5,000 hectares each. And since the great majority of them are tribal chiefs, the logical solution is to ask them to distribute these lands according to the laws in force since the Ottoman rule. No new legislation is necessary to fulfill the two aims of distribution of the public domain to needy peasants and the division of the big estates.

Such a solution will not mean that every estate will be only 1500 dunums but it will mean that perhaps 80% of Jazirah will be in holdings approximating 1500 dunums and some 20% in holdings of 10,000-15,000 dunums for tractor cultivation.

C. Shortcomings of the Decree

423 The basic defect of decree 96 is that it erred in diagnosing
656 the real problem of land ownership in Syria. As the United Nations
433 Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East aptly described the situation (part I page 34). "In the Middle East, most of the population--perhaps as much as 90%--lives virtually on the margin of subsistence. But while maldistribution of income obstructs economic progress in a variety of ways, it is secondary to the basic problem in each country of grossly inadequate output in relation to the total population. This is the central fact of economic life in the Middle East." Thus the real problem facing the Government in Jazirah is not that a few people own large tracts of land (though some of them do and should be controlled), but whether the present type of cultivation is not working for a better national economy than small holdings will be able to do.

This criticism of decree 96 does not mean that land abuses do not exist in Jazirah. Undoubtedly they do. But it is a long way between admitting this and trying to correct it by dividing the land indiscriminately into 1500 dunum lots.

The shortcomings of decree law 96 are numerous and without discussing them in detail since the law is being amended, it is necessary to recognize some of them.

423 In the first place, the law amounts in fact to confiscation of
656 property because it arbitrarily abolishes rights of individuals gained
433 over the land through the normal processes of established law.

Secondly, it allows a uniform area for every farmer whether he uses tractor or mule, and whether he allows dry cultivation in Jazirah or irrigated farming in the Euphrates or the Khabur. It is evident that an irrigated area of 1500 dunums is more than adequate even for a large farmer while the same area is too small for tractor dry farming.

Thirdly, the confiscatory provisions of the law are not limited to lands recently acquired from the public domain, but cover lands for which deeds have been in the hands of the owners for decades. Decree 96 achieves this by reversing the stipulations of the preceding laws and by stating that in unsurveyed lands every title should be limited by the area mentioned in it and not by the boundaries.

Fourthly, if social justice is the aim, why should the law be limited to control of the ownership of land and not extended to control commercial and industrial property as well as real estate in cities and cash money? Further, how can the law treat on the same basis five hundred dunums planted to orchards or olive trees and a neighboring area of the same dimensions planted to wheat?

V. Land Ownership Along the Khabur

471 There is more concentration of land ownership along the Khabur that in theother parts of Jazirah, though the concentration is less apparent because the cultivable lands are smaller.

In the north, around Ras el Ain, the Shashan tribe dominated the country. South of them are the Assyrian holdings. Around Hassakeh, some Christians have bought lands from the Juburs, but south of the town and down to Shaddadah, the Jubur Chiefs of the Milhem family own or control both banks of the river. They own all the naqourahs and work their lands by renting it to the members of their tribe on conditions described in the next chapter. One hardly finds a Jubur who is not of the Milhem, or a stranger from inside Syria, who owns property in the Jubur region of the Khabur.

Lately, the Milhem have begun renting land to irrigation projects by pumps. But unlike the Kurds and Tay people of upper Jazirah, the Milhem have never agreed to enter into partnership for the ownership of land.

471 The land problem along the Khabur is not to distribute land to the Jubur Bedouin who cannot use it because he cannot irrigate it, but to remove the hold of the Milhem family and to facilitate ownership by the entrepreneur who invests money in the land, installs pumps, and irrigates areas formerly arid. Unfortunately, the old laws and decree 96 work for the benefit of the river bank owner who, at the end of the lease, takes possession not only of his original strip of land which he leased, but also of all the new land brought under cultivation and irrigation by the lessee at his own expense.

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VI. Recapitulation

185 To recapitulation, the problem of land ownership in Jazirah is one of stabilizing the existing property rights for 57% of the area of the region, of distributing about 25% by the simple expedient of having the Sheik or Agha share his land with the members of his tribe in whose name he holds it, or passing legislation to enable the investor along the Khabur to gain ownership of the land he irrigates and reclaims, and of simplifying the processes of law so that all these functions can be performed and disputes between property owners settled and deeds granted within a short period. It becomes apparent that the success of such a policy is subject to a prior survey of the region. But this need not necessarily mean long delays because aerial survey at present is a quick operation.

The importance of the stabilization on the regularization of the land problem in Jazirah cannot be overemphasized. Besides all the advantages mentioned on page 27, land will come to have real value on the market and the wealth of the entire Jazirah will be increased tenfold. The famer will be enable to diversify his culture and escape the dangers of monoculture. After surveying the division of land, the farmer, working on his own lot in which he has no partners, will be induced to improve it with buildings, irrigation wells, fertilizers, and tree and vegetable gardens. There is no reason why the plains of Jazirah, wherever water is available, cannot be made to resemble the gardens of Damascus with time and an increase in agricultural knowledge among the population.

LAND TENURE IN JAZIRAH

427 The custom in Jazirah is for the tenant to pay the rent in a percentage of the crop delivered to the owner free of all expense.

I. Land Tenure for the Peasant

427 651 Under Ottoman rule and because land was abundant and peasants scarce, the rent was fixed at 7L. The owner and the tenant were each responsible for the Government taxes on his own share of the produce.

The Ottoman Government collected the tithe and the werko as taxes on the land. The title, as its name implies, was 10% of the produce to which was added later 2-1/2% as special revenue for public instruction.

Because the peasant wanted to be as far away from Government officials as possible he paid the landowner 19-1/2%, including the tithe and the rent, and did not care how much of that the landowner actually paid so long as he remained unmolested by the public officials. This percentage of 19-1/2% is still prevailing and is known by the name of "Hassil and Tabo".

In 1924 the French found the collection of the tithe cumbersome and adopted a modified system. They took the average tax paid by the land in the preceding four years and made the sum obligatory. In practice, this meant light taxation on the land, but the landowner still received from the peasant the same percentage as when the tithe was actually paid. Later, when the tax of 7% on agricultural produce took the place of all land taxes and the peasant had to pay it when he transported his crop for sale, he kept paying the landowner 19-1/2% so that his percentage has come to mean rent to the landowner without the obligation on his part to pay the taxes of the peasant. What made the situation acceptable to the peasant was that the increase in population would have raised the rent anyway. He now pays this rent for the use of land and house. If the house is not included for his, he constructs his own house of sun-baked bricks, but retains the right to remove the wooden roof when he leaves the village.

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II. Land Tenure for the Tractor Owner

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The tractor owner gets better advantages when he rents land. He also pays a percentage of the crop. It used to be 5-6% with the obligation to plant a "shkara" for the landowner. The "Shkara" is a certain amount of seed which the landowner provides and which the tenant agrees to plant by his machines and to harvest with his combine free of charge. The "shkara" is proportional to the area of land rented. It varies between 10-20 sacks of wheat. In the last few years when demand for land became great, the rents rose to 10-12% with the habitual "shkara". Usually the rental contracts are for three years. They rarely exceed this period.

III. Land Tenure Along the Khabur

Along the Khabur rents are different in manner. There, the landowner provides not only the land but also the water for irrigation and half the seeds. In return he receives half the crop. The peasant furnishes his labor for plowing, seeding caring for the irrigation canals, irrigation and harvesting.

Rents for pump irrigation were between 7-10% until 1951. The cotton rush increased the rents for strips of land near the river to 15-20%, but the failure of the crop reduced the rush for land and the rent is down again to around 10%.

THE PROBLEM OF CREDIT IN JAZIRAH

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The rapid economic advance of Jazirah in the last years is nothing less than amazing. In 1941, in the region of Qamishli, for example, the farthest village cultivated was less than 20 kilometers south of the city. All the land beyond was pasture for the Bedouin. East of Kubur el Bid to Tal Koshak, a distance of 60 kilometers, the land was similarly idle. There was not a single tractor in the region of Ras el Ain, and not a single water pump on the Khabur aside from those of the Assyrians.

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Qamishli itself, the principal town of Jazirah, had no electric light, no paved roads, no sewage system, and very few acceptable houses to live in. The same was true in a larger measure of the other towns of Jazirah.

361 At present, agriculture extends in an unbroken line from the
311 Turkish and Iraqi borders south to the Rad and Hassaksh, and west to
265 Ras el Ain and midway to Rakka. Qamishli has all the amenities of a fair-sized city with sewage, electricity, asphalted roads, running water, places of amusement, and modern office buildings and houses. The other towns of Jazirah show similar progress but in a smaller way.

454 All this development could not have been achieved without extensive use of capital. It was stated that the original emigrants to Jazirah whether Christians or Kurds, brought very little capital with them. Whatever they have now was made in Jazirah and not brought from outside.

I. Credit to the Bedouin and Kurd

4521 The nearest commercial market to Jazirah where credit was
438 available was Aleppo. Aleppo merchants first provided goods shipped to the towns of Jazirah to be smuggled into Turkey. And Jazirah merchants working on a commission or partnership basis made good profits. Some of them specialized in lending money to the Bedouins and Kurds and for them, also, credit was available at Aleppo. They borrowed at an interest rate of 9% and lent at 35-50%. Most of them, however, did not lend money outright as a general practice, but sold goods and especially textiles, coffee and sugar to the farmer against bills maturing at harvest time. The exorbitant interest was added over the price of the goods, and the peasant accepted it as a somewhat higher price and did not consider it as interest. Theis system still prevails at the present time.

II. Credit to the Machinery Owner

4521 With the expansion of agriculture and the extensive use of agricultural machinery, credit in much larger amounts became necessary. The farmer using machinery needed two kinds of credit. He needed credit to pay for his machines, and seasonal credit to cover a part of his expenses for wages, seed, fuel, and general expenditures.

In the first years of the War, dealers in agricultural machinery supplied a part of the need by selling on an installment basis for a period of 20 months. But between 1943 and 1948 they demanded cash payment before delivery. In the last four years, they have renewed their credit facilities.

III. The Role of the Banque de Syrie

The Banque de Syrie in Qamishli provided a part of the need for seasonal capital. The amount of its credit increased yearly with the development of the region until it reached the sum of LS 7,000,000 this year out of a total credit of LS 17,000,000. 452 453

But the influence of the Banque de Syrie in the economic life of Jazirah is not limited to the sum of LS 7 millions disbursed directly by its branch office in Qamishli to individual borrowers. Most of the remaining credit supplied to Jazirah by Aleppo finds its source in the Banque de Syrie.

In Qamishli the Banque extends two types of credit. Commercial credit in bills signed by the debtor and endorsed by two persons acceptable to the Banque, the last of whom should have a credit in his name free at the moment of discount for a sum at least equal to the sum discounted. The maximum duration of the bill is 90 days. The second type is agricultural credit. It used to be given against bills of the same type discussed above but renewable twice, but in the last five years a new and more elastic system was introduced whereby credit was given for a period of nine months for winter crops and six months for summer crops. The beneficiary has to sign an agreement with the Banque with two other persons as endorsers. During the period of the loan he can draw the amount agreed upon and refund it at the date of expiration.

The average amount allowed to the owner of an agricultural outfit is LS 15-20 000. The Banque does not worry about its loans because it usually accepts only the best signatures and it has always been able to recover its loans even in the worst years. Its interest rates are 9% while they are 7% in the other towns of Syria.

The seven million pounds credit of the Banque de Syrie is not given entirely to farmers and merchants for legitimate use. A good part of it goes to money lenders in Qamishli who lend it in turn to farmers at much higher rates reaching 24-60%.

IV. Credit by Aleppo Merchants

Since the Banque provides only about 45% of the credit needed, and that only to the best signatures, a large field is left to the private money lender. The merchants of Aleppo directly or through their agents in Qamishli provide the remaining percentage of credit. This credit is given in commercial bills for a duration of three 452

452 months but renewable to the harvest season. Depending on the condition of the crops and the financial situation of the borrower the interest varies from 18-36%. This Aleppo credit does not become available to the farmer however until after the month of March for winter crops when it becomes possible to judge the condition of the crop. In the last three years the firm of Ma'marbashi Bros. has opened an office in Qamishli for commerce and banking. Its loans are no different from the other private money lenders.

Many of the merchants who lend money are also wheat, rice and cotton merchants. They receive the produce of their debtors which they sell for a commission and thus deduct the amount of their loans. In this way they have a sort of collateral besides the bills and they also profit from the commissions.

V. Credit by the Agricultural Bank

452 652 The Agricultural Bank of the Syrian Government does not play effectively the role for which it was designed. Aside from all the excessive formalities required by the Bank regulations which make its operations slow, cumbersome, and onerous to the debtor as explained in the report of July 15 1952 on "The Agricultural Bank," the amounts allotted by the Bank to Jazirah are infinitesimal in proportion to the needs of the area. The amount of credit extended by the Bank for long and short term loans between the years 1944-1949 has averaged LS 150,000 yearly, i.e., 1%, out of the total credit of some LS 15 millions needed by Jazirah. Further, the Bank can grant loans over LS 600 only against mortgage of land, and since 70% of t the lands of Jazirah have no title, the activity of the Bank is accordingly restricted. A new decree, number 9, dated June 26, 1952, permits the Bank to give loans to users of land as well as owners, and puts at the disposal of the Bank the sum of two million pounds for all Syria. The share of Jazirah in this sum will not exceed LS 200,000 which will not change in any degree the credit situation in the region.

VI Credit and its Relation to the Land Problem

452 The problem of credit in Jazirah is tied up to a great extent with the stabilization and legalization of the land problem. The Banque de Syrie and the Aleppo merchant evaluate the borrowing capacity of the farmer by the machines he owns, the area of his

452 plantation and the value of his lands. Lands without title have no commercial value though the farmer may use them without opposition. This is apparent at the present time when lands with title and undisputed boundaries sell at ten times the price of occupied lands without title A survey and cadastration of Jazirah lands with a rapid and form settlement of boundary disputed and the grant of property deeds will expand the borrowing capacities of Jazirah enonously and may tend to reduce the exorbitant rates of interest demanded by the money lenders. On such a trable basis, other banking establishments may be induced to open business in the region and relieve its dependance on the greedy money lender.

COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORTATION

491 During the French Mandate there was not a single paved or as-
496 phalted road in Jazirah. In winter road communications were out between the different towns and villages and the only means of travel was by train which passed through the more important centers of Qamishli, Amuda and Dirbassiya For the rest of the year road transport became possible but expensive because of the absence of roads For this reason, the whole region of Deirik remained undeveloped until quite recently.

I. Roads Within Jazirah

491 The independent Government in Syria started building a
653 road in 1945 between Qamishli and Hassakeh which served at the same time as the arterial road to Aleppo. Though the distance between the two towns is only 85 kilometers, the funds alloted yearly for the road were so small that now, after seven years, only about 30 kilometers are asphalted and the rest is paved The maintenance does not keep up with the deterioration and the road is going to pieces. However, now at last, communication is assured in all weather while before trucks were stuck for days during the rainy season.

Another asphalted road joins Qamishli with Amuda, a distance of 30 kilometers. Here again deterioration is rapid. This road is to be projected another 30 kilometers to Dirbassiya and from there to Ras el Ain, a distance of 60 kilometers.

491 The road Qamishli-Hassakeh is extended for 50 kilometers south to Point 47 on the way to Deir Ezzor. This section is also asphalted.

491 It used to be one of the worst roads in Jazirah. At the end of this stretch begins the desert of Deir Ezzor 100 kilometers wide. Some sections of it where rainwater prevents the passage of cars are paved. Nevertheless, the road closes during several weeks in winter.

Another road built crudely by the British Army stretches from Qamishli to Kubur el Bid-Talkoshak-Mossul. It is paved with rough stones and it is only used by cars in winter. Beyond Tel Abu a road branches to Deirik and Ain Diwar.

[487] Aside from these, all Jazirah roads are tracks. There are no roads between Amuda, Derbassiya and Hassakeh, nor between Ras el Ain and Hassekeh, nor between the more important villages clustering around the several towns.

The absence of bridges across the Jagjag renders communication more difficult especially in winter when the waters of the river rise. There is a bridge at Qamishli, another one at Tal Brak 40 kilometers south and a third one at Hassakeh. In the relatively crowded villages near Qamishli along both sides of the river, crossings are effected with great hardship by loaded trucks especially in winter.

II Roads Between Jazirah and Aleppo

361 Aleppo is the nearest commercial center to Jazirah. It is
438 the market for Jazirah grains, wool, samneh and hides. It provides
491 Jazirah with all its needs of cement, textiles and all kinds of imported goods. That is why daily communication between the two regions is vital to Jazirah, but the Government has not judged it yet necessary to construct an all-weather road. Such a road exists in
491 more or less good shape from Qamishli to Hassakeh and to Point 47. From there on, the road to Rakka is closed all during the winter months and travel to Deir Ezzor is interrupted whenever there is heavy rain. The northern and shorter road Qamishli-Ras el Ain-Rakka-Aleppo is also closed in winter for goods and passengers. The shortest road and that which passes through the best developed areas is the one which follows the railway line Qamishli-Amuda-Dirbassiya-Ras el Ain-Tal Abiad-Jarablus-Aleppo. It is 420 kilometers long as contrasted with 465 kilometers for Qamishli-Ras el Ain-Rakka-Aleppo, and 485 kilometers for Qamishli-Hassakeh-Rakka-Aleppo and 565 for Qamishli-Hassakeh-Deir Ezzor-Aleppo which is the usual route followed in winter.

III The Baghdad Railway

The Baghdad Railway which runs 247 kilometers in Syria is the principal means of transport for goods. It handles about 200, 000 tons of goods every year. The bulk of Jazirah wheat is transported over it. But it has had in recent years keen competition from trucks in spite of the bad roads for several reasons. The Qamishli-Aleppo line passes for 70% of its length through Turkish territory and is under Turkish control. When the Turks choose to irritate the Syrians they restrict the entrance to the stations and in numerous other ways frustrate the Syrians and cause them hardship. Whole trains are unaccountably delayed for days in the Turkish stations.

Already passenger traffic is handled almost entirely by planes, cars and busses, except in winter months when the roads are unsafe. A bus charges LS 10 from Qamishli to Aleppo and makes the trip in 12 hours. A small car charges LS 20 and makes the trip in 8 hours. It takes the "Express" 20-22 hours to reach Aleppo from Qamishli and the fare is LS 30 in second-class "wagon lit" with tips.

For merchandise the train rate is LS 23. 5 per ton from Qamishli to Aleppo. It costs the farmer an additional LS 6-12 depending on the distance to transport a ton of wheat from the field to the station. There is also an amount of about LS 4 involved in handling, all of which makes the actual rate by train about LS 35.

The truck charges LS 35 from Qamishli to Aleppo during the wheat season but it carries the wheat directly from the combine in the field to the merchant's store in Aleppo thus reducing the handling expenses to a minimum and transporting the goods in the shortest time. If the farmer is not hard pressed for money, which is rather rare, and can wait until the winter months and spring, he can transport his wheat for a rate as low as LS 10-15 per ton by truck. Inversely, the cost of tranport from Aleppo to Jazirah rises in winter and spring and decreases in summer and autumn.

Though truck transport is more advantageous in many ways than transport by train, the number of trucks available and the condition of the roads make the transport of a whole crop by trucks impossible. To achieve that, a complete road network needs to be constructed, diesel trucks would have to be imported and the discriminatory tariffs against them abolished.

IV. Telephone, Telegraph and Air Communication

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509 In 1950 telephone communication became possible with Jazirah for the first time on a commercial basis. Telegraph communication has long been established and an air service connectin Qamishli with Aleppo and Damascus started in 1946, then interrupted by the Palestinian War, has been resumed twice weekly. Fares from Qamishli to Aleppo and Damascus are LS 25 and 50, respectively.

V. Railway Line Projects

165 Railway lines wholly inside Syria from Jazirah to the interior cities have been suggested by the Gibb report and by the United Nations Economic Survey Mission. They suggested a line from Tal Koshak to Hassakeh and from there to Rakka and Aleppo. Such a line would by-pass Qamishli which is the more important agricultural and commercial center, and would go in a district only newly developed, sparsely populated and not of the fertility of the Qamishli area. It seems that a line starting from Qamishli itself would be shorter and would service a more fertile and populated district. From Hassakeh the line could follow the Khabur as long as possible before veering to Deir Ezzor. This would be longer than the proposed line from Hassakeh to Rakka directly, but it would have the advantage of servicing the Khabur Valley and collecting its crops, whereas, the line Hassakeh-Rakka is completely desert. From Rakka there is only one route to Aleppo.

It is difficult to choose between a policy of road construction and railway lines without detailed study of the economics of both, but, whatever the result of the study, Jazirah needs cheap and easy means of communication.

COMMERCE OF JAZIRAH

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441 It stands to reason that the commerce of Jazirah is mainly in its taple prodcuts and in the goods required for the development of its essential industry which is agriculture.

The main crop being wheat, it forms the largest item both in bulk and in value. But the Jazirah merchant plays a secondary role in the handling of this crop. He is sometimes a partner, but more

often an agent of the Aleppo merchant who furnishes the capital and has the necessary warehouses in Aleppo and the commercial knowledge and connections in the Syrian market and abroad to dispose of the crop at the best terms. 438 441

I. The Problem of Storage and Warehouses

The dependance of Jazirah on Aleppo merchants is such that until the present time there is not a single warehouse or silo to store wheat for a few months in all Jazirah belonging to an individual merchant or big farmer. During harvest season, the wheat is stacked in the open near the railway stations and left without cover until it is shipped to Aleppo. The hangers of the stations can only hold a small part of the crop. The Mira built a few depots but it is not known whether they will be put at the disposal of merchants. 438 241

The special conditions of cultivation in Jazirah connected with the problem of credit and land ownership make the transport of wheat from the farms to the stations during harvest season a heroic affair. This is caused by two reasons: in the first place, the farmer is always in need of money and has to ship his crop quickly to Aleppo to sell it, and, secondly, even if the big farmer is not in need of money, he does not feel it is safe to keep his crop in the villages. In most cases, he is only a tenant and it does not pay for him to construct a depot on land, he does not own. Even if he owned the land, he would hesitate to keep his crop away from the market until the winter months when he might need money but might find himself unable to transport his crop because of bad roads.

The logical solution would be to construct warehouses in the towns or near the stations, but, here again, the lack of capital prevents the accomplishment of this job.

The Kurd is the only farmer who keeps a part of his crop on the land. As a good and thrifty peasant, he stores his seeds, the provisions for his family and usually an amount of wheat equal to the seeds he planted. If anything remains, he sells to buy clothes and foodstuffs. The Kurd keeps the extra wheat he has in holes dug in the ground called "jifr". The hole is usually two meters in diameter and 2-3 meters deep. It is lined with "tibn" to keep the moisture away and the wheat remains in a good condition in it for several months. The peasant has a number of these jifrs depending on the 241 251

241 amount he has to store. The jifrs are usually dug around the village
251 to guard them from theft. The condition of the future wheat crop in Jazirah becomes known by the end of March. At that time, if the forcast is favorable, the surplus wheat stored in the jifrs is brought to the market, but if the future crop is considered in a bad condition the wheat remains stored to be planted in the fall.

The second most important item of Jazirah commerce is the summer crops of rice, cotton, sorghum and sesame. They follow the same pattern of wheat and barley.

II. Cattle and Sheep

439 Jazirah has an active trade in transit shipment of cattle and
231 sheep. Before the last few years, it was itself a provider of sheep.
221 The Bedouin tilled a part of the land and grazed his sheep in summer
233 and fall on the land around the village. In winter and spring he became a nomad again and migrated with his flocks to the south and east. It was customary to pass scores of villages in winter which were completely deserted and the mud houses sealed with one guarding left for the whole village. The expansion of mechanical agriculture reduced the grazing lands considerably and the number of sheep dwindled.

At present, sheep and cattle are imported from Turkey and Iraq. They cross the border on foot and are either smuggled in or pay customs duties. They rest in Jazirah and are fed, then transported to Aleppo by train, or, in springtime, on foot.

III. Imported Goods

438 The main imports of Jazirah are agricultural machinery and spare parts, textiles, fuel wood and building materials. Foodstuff which is not grown in Jazirah is also imported. Because no statistics are available, it is worthwhile to make a study of the volume and value of Jazirah commerce for the next few years as an indication of the development of the region.

IV. Commercial Future of Jazirah Towns

The commercial future of Jazirah towns and especially of Qamishli is assured. Jazirah already produced in 1946 17% of the

total Syrian cereals. Only Aleppo was ahead of it with 30% of the total production. (Gibb Report, table 16, p. 28) At present, it is probable that Jazirah surpasses Aleppo in cereal production and with an area approaching that of the Mohafazat of Aleppo, it is potentially more productive because of the Jagjag and Khabur Rivers which make possible a more diverse agriculture. 438

The problem of land ownership is bound to be settled in some way and credit is expanding gradually so that the dependance of Jazirah on Aleppo may diminish with time. The lack of lands and the constant increase in population will force the farmer to turn to intensive cultivation which in turn requires more labor and creates jobs for more people. The towns will benefit from increased production and population and will prosper and grow in their turn. It is logical to anticipate that Jazirah merchants will try to dispose of their crops without the help of Aleppo entrepreneurs. This makes for increased profits and more propserity. It is also reasonable to expect that a small industry based on the processing of agricultural products, such as flour mills, vegetable oil, starch, fruit, and vegetable conserves, will be established in the town of Jazirah. When cotton becomes an established crop, it is economical to gin it in the nearest town and save the cost of transport. The seeds will be needed for planting, for the extraction of oil and for cattle feed. 185

Qamishli is the only town of consequence in a fertile area of 700,000 hectares almost all cultivable in one way or another in the Qadas of Qamishli and Dijla. It is the chief town between Mossul and Aleppo, a distance of some 700 kilometers. Nisibin the older town now in Turkey was alwasy an important commercial center in the old times and Qamishli now has taken its place. It would not be surprising if in another 20 years Qamishli attained a population of 80,000. 361

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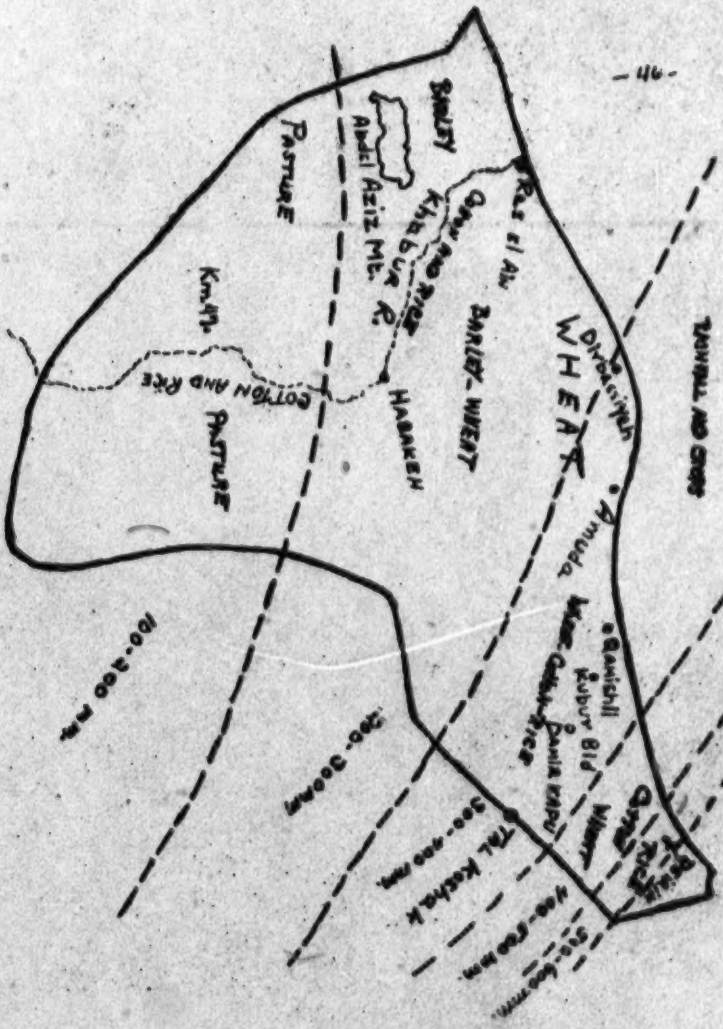
RAINFALL AND CROP MAP OF JAZIRAH
RAINFALL AND CROP
BARLEY-WHEAT
WHEAT
COTTON AND RICE
PASTURE
PASTURE
HASAKEH
Abdel Aziz Mt.
Khabur R.
Qamishli
Ras el Ain
Amuda
Derbasiyah
Ain Diwar
Tal Kashkak
Qasr
Ain Arus
Ain Ghazal
Ain Hajar
Ain Hamra
Ain Hamra
Ain Hamra

619
361
133
491